

Miss Farren in the Character of Creusa.



It is, it is Nicander! 'tis my Lord!

Act IV. Sc. 4.

Published by Hareston & Co. Sept. 1. 1761.

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C R E U S A,

QUEEN OF ATHENS.

A

T R A G E D Y.

As it is Acted at the

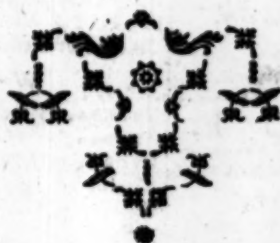
T H E A T R E S - R O Y A L

I N

Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden.

Written by W. WHITEHEAD, Esq.

K



L O N D O N;

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M DCC LXXXI,

PROLOGUE.

PROLOGUES of old, the learn'd in language
say,

Were merely introductions to the play,
Spoken by gods, or ghosts, or men who knew
What'er was previous to the scenes in view;
And complaisantly came to lay before ye
The several heads, and windings of the story.
But modern times and British rules are such,
Our bards before-hand must not tell too much;
Nor dare we, like the neighb'ring French, admit
E'en confidantes, who might instruct the pit,
By asking questions of the leading few,
And hearing secrets, which before they knew.
Yet what we can to help this antique piece
We will attempt.—Our scene to-night is Greece.
And by the the magick of the poet's rod,
This stage the temple of the Delphick god!
Where kings, and chiefs, and sages came of old,
Like modern fools, to have their fortunes told;
And monarchs were enthron'd, or nations freed,
As an old priest, or witber'd maid decreed.
Yet think not all were equally deceiv'd,
Some knew, more doubted, many more believ'd.
In short, these oracles, and witching rhimes,
Were but the pious frauds of ancient times;
Wisely contriv'd to keep mankind in awe,
When faith was wonder, and religion law!
Thus much premis'd, to every feeling breast
We leave the scenes themselves to tell the rest.
—Yet something sure was to the critics said,
Which I forgot—some invocation made!
Ye critick bands, like jealous guardians plac'd
To watch th' encroachments on the realms of taste,
From you our author would two boons obtain,
Not wholly dissident, nor wholly vain:
Two things he asks; 'tis modest sure, from you
Who can do all things, to request but two:
First, to his scene: a kind attention pay,
Then judge!—with candour judge—and we obey.



EPILOGUE.

Spoken by **PYTHIA**.

AT length I'm freed from tragical parade,
No more a Pythian priestess—though a maid;
At once resigning, with my sacred dwelling,
My wreaths, my wand, my arts of fortune-telling.

Yet superstitious folks, no doubt, are here,
Who still regard me with a kind of fear,
Left to their secret thoughts these prying eyes
Should boldly pass, and take them by surprise.
Nay, though I disavow the whole deceit,
And fairly own my science all a cheat;
Should I declare, in spite of ears and eyes,
The deus were handsome, or the critics wife,
They'd all believe it, and with dear delight,
Say to themselves at least,
"The girl has taste; the woman's in the right."
Or, should I tell the ladies, so dispos'd,
They'd get good matches, ere the season clos'd,
They'd smile; perhaps, with seeming discontent,
And, sneering, wonder what the creature meant;
But whisper to their friends, with beating heart,
"Suppose there should be something in her art."
Grown statesmen too would chuckle, should I say,
On such a motion, and by such a day,
They would be summon'd from their own affairs
To tend the nation's more important cares;
"Well, if I must—how'er I dread the load,
I'll undergo it—for my country's good."
All men are bubbles, in a skilful band,
The ruling passion is the conjurer's wand.
Whether we praise, foretell, persuade, advise,
'Tis that alone confirms us fools or wise.
The devil without may spread the tempting sin,
But the sure conqueror is—the devil within.

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

LYSSEUS, King of Athens.
ILYSSUS, an unknown Youth, Attendant on the
Temple at Delphi.
ALETES, a Grecian Sage.
PHORBAS, an old Athenian.
Priests of Apollo.
Citizens of Athens.

W O M E N.

CREUSA, Queen of Athens.
PYTHIA, Priestess of Apollo.
LYCEA, an Attendant on the Queen.
Virgins belonging to the Temple.
Guards, Attendants on the Queen, &c.

SCENE, the Vestibule of the Temple of Apollo
at DELPHI, and the Laurel Grove adjoining.

C R E U S A.

ACT I.

SCENE, *the Vestibule of the Temple.*

Enter Ilyssus and Virgins.

Ily. **H**ASTE, haste, ye virgins, round the columns twine

Your flowery chaplets; and with streams fresh drawn
Of Castaly, bedew the sacred porch
Of the great god of day. Already see
His orient beam has reach'd the double top
Of high Parnassus, and begins to shed
A gleamy lustre o'er the laurel grove!
Haste, haste, ye virgins! From the vale beneath
I hear the noise of chariots and of steeds,
Which hither bend their course; for every sound
Seems nearer than the former.—And behold
A reverend stranger, who, perhaps, proclaims
Th' approach of some great monarch, to consult
All-seeing Phœbus, or implore his aid.
Haste, haste, ye virgins!

Enter Phorbas.

Pbor. Tell me, gentle maids,
And thou, fair youth, who seem'st to lead the train,
Is this the temple of the Delphick god?

Ily. It is; and on the middle point of earth
It's firm foundation, by immortal hands,
Stands fix'd—but break we off; the folded gates
Unbar, and lo! the priestess's self appears!

[The Pythia speaks as she descends from the temple.]

Pyth. Hence, ye profane! nor with unhallow'd
step

Pollute the threshold of the Delian king. *[art.]*
Who slew the Python!—say, from whence thou
And what thy business, stranger?

Pbor. Sacred maid,
From Athens am I come, the harbinger
Of great Creusa, mine and Athens' queen.

Pyth. Comes she on pious purpose, to adore
The mystick shrine oracular?

Pbor. She does;
And with her comes the partner of her bed,
Æolian Xuthus; he, whose powerful arm
Sav'd Athens from her fate, and in return,
From good Erechtheus' bounteous hand, receiv'd
His daughter and his crown.—Would he had found
Some other recompence! *[Half aside.]*

Pyth. *[Overbearing him.]* Would he had found!
Old age is talkative, and I may learn *[they?]*
Somewhat of moment from him—Wherefore come
Does famine threaten, or wide-wasting plague
Infect the land?

Pbor. Thank Heaven, our crouded streets
Have felt no dire disease; and plenty still
Laughs in our blooming fields. Alas! I fear
The childless goddess, who presides o'er Athens,
Has found a surer method to declare

How ill the brooks that any stranger hand
Should wield th' Athenian sceptre.

Pyth. Does from her
The vengeance come?

Pbor. I know not whence it comes,
But this I know, full fifteen years have roll'd
Since first their hands were join'd, and roll'd in vain;
For still the royal pair in silence mourn,
Curs'd with a barren bed. For this they come,
T' explore the latent cause, and beg of Heav'n
To grant an heir, or teach them where to fix,
On what selected head, the Athenian crown.

Pyth. And Heaven, no doubt, will hear and grant
their prayer.

Ilyssus, haste, and bid the priests prepare
For sacrifice.—You, Nyssa, and your sisters,
Amid the laurel grove with speed perform
The morning's due lustration.
Then hither all return.—Myself mean while
Will tempt the voice of age, and try to draw
Some useful secrets from him. *[Aside.]*

The good king
Of whom you speak, Erechtheus, did his people
Esteem and love him as they ought? for fame
Talk'd largely of his worth. He was a king—

Pbor. He was my good old master, such a king
As Heaven but rarely sends. Did we esteem
And love him, dost thou ask? Oh, we ador'd him;
He was our father, not our king—These tears
At least may speak my heart—We must not hope
In these degenerate times to see him equal'd.
He never did an unkind act, but once,
And then he thought the publick good requir'd it;
Tho' much I fear the evils we lament
From thence derive their origin.

Pyth. What act?
What unkind act?

Pbor. O maid, 'twere long to tell
The whole unhappy story; yet, in part,
Hear what to me appears too closely join'd
With these our present ills. There was a youth
Athenian born, but not of royal blood,
His name Nicander: him unlucky Fate
Had made the lover of our present queen,
While yet a maid. What wilt not love attempt
In young ambitious minds? He told his pain,
And won the fair in secret to admit,
And to return his passion. The good king
Was for a time deceiv'd, but found at last
Th' audacious fraud, and drove the guilty youth
To banishment perpetual. Some say
'Twas, by his means he fell, tho' that my heart
Consents not to believe. Thus much is sure,
Nicander wander'd forth a wretched exile,
And ere few days had pass'd, upon the road, *[blood.]*
Were found his well-known garment stain'd with

Sure sign of murder, and as sure a sign
No needy robber was the instrument.

Pyth. How bore Creusa this?

Phor. At first, her sorrows

Were loud and frantick. Time at length subdu'd
Her rage to silent grief. The good old king,
To soothe her woes, consented she should raise
A tomb to her Nicander; and perform
A kind of annual rites to parted love.

Pyth. But that not long continued, for we find
She married Xuthus.

Phor. 'Twas a match of state;
He sav'd her country, and she gave her hand,
Because that country ask'd it. But her heart
Is buried with Nicander. Still to him,
And Xuthus' self permits it; she performs
Her yearly off'rings, and adorns with flowers
An empty tomb—Would he had liv'd and reign'd
Her wedded lord! we had not wanted then
Th' assistance of a stranger arm to guard
Th' Athenian state, nor had we then been driven
To search for heirs at Delphi.

Pyth. Stop thy tongue,
Or speak with reverence of the sacred shrine.
—Thy words were hasty, but thy silence now
Makes just atonement for them—Then perhaps
Thou think'st this want of heirs, a curse entail'd
By Heaven on Athens for Nicander's death,
And Xuthus' reign?

Phor. I am Athenian born,
Nor love Æolian kings, however great
And good they may be.

Pyth. The imperial Xuthus
Is much renown'd.

Phor. Is virtuous, brave, and pious;
Perhaps too pious.

Pyth. How!

Phor. Forgive me, maid,
I speak my thoughts with freedom.

Pyth. What thou speak'st
To me, is sacred. Then perchance thou rank'st
His journey hither to address the god, [pious.
Among those acts which thou would'st call too

Phor. For me the gods of Athens would suffice.—
Yet do I pay just reverence, holy maid,
To thee, and to thy shrine.

Pyth. Thy zeal for Athens
Is too intemperate. But the train returns
And interrupts our converse. Say, Ilysius,
Are they prepar'd?

Enter Ilysius and Virgins.

Ilyf. They are, and only wait
Th' approaching victims.

Pyth. By yon train, the queen
Is now on her arrival. Thou, Ilysius,
Receive her here; while I, as custom wills,
Deep in the temple's inmost gloom retire,
And wait th' inspiring god—Ilysius, hear;
When thou hast paid due honours to the queen,
Haste to Aletes, in the laurel grove
Impatient I expect him: tell him, youth,
Things of uncommon import do demand
His instant presence—But the crowd approaches.
Stranger, farewell—I feel, I feel within,
An heav'n-born impulse, and the seeds of truth
Are lab'ring in my breast—Stranger, farewell.
[*The Pythia returns to the temple, and the gates shut.*

Enter Creusa and Attendants.

Cre. No farther need we conduct. Bid the guards
Return, and wait the king.

Phor. Does ought of moment
Detain him on the road?

Cre. He stops a while

At great Trophonius' cave, that he may leave
No duty unperform'd. Heaven grant his zeal
May meet with just success!

Ilyf. Please you, great queen,
In yon pavilion to repose, and taste
Some light refecton.

Cre. Ha!—Lycea—Phorbas,
What youth is this? There's something in his eyes,
His shape, his voice—What may we call thee, youth,

Ilyf. The servant of the god, who guards this fane.

Cre. Bear'st thou no name?

Ilyf. Ilysius, gracious queen,
The priests and virgins call me.

Cre. Ha! Ilysius!

That name's Athenian. Tell me, gentle youth,
Art thou of Athens then?

Ilyf. I have no country;
Nor know I whence I am.

Cre. Who were thy parents?

Thy father, mother?

Ilyf. Ever honoured queen,
I never knew a mother's tender cares,
Nor heard the instructions of a father's tongue.

Cre. How cam'st thou hither?

Ilyf. Eighteen years are pass'd
Since in the temple's portal I was found
A sleeping infant.

Cre. Eighteen years! good Heaven!
That fatal time recalls a scene of woe—
Let me not think—Were there no marks to shew
From whom or whence thou wert?

Ilyf. I have been told
An osier basket, such as shepherds weave,
And a few scatter'd leaves, were all the bed
And cradle I could boast.

Cre. Unhappy child!

But more, O ten times more unhappy they
Who lost perhaps, in thee, their only offspring!
What pangs, what anguish must the mother feel?
Compell'd, no doubt, by some disastrous fate—
But this is all conjecture.—

Ilyf. O, great queen, [there
Had those from whom I sprung been form'd like
Had they e'er felt the secret pangs of nature,
They had not left me to the desert world
So totally expos'd. I rather fear
I am the child of lowliness and vice,
And happy only in my ignorance.

—Why should the weep? Or if her tears can fall
For even a stranger's but suspected woes,
How is that people blest'd, where she presides
As mother and as queen!—Pleas'd you retire?

Cre. No, stay Thy sentiments, at least bespeak
A generous education. Tell me, youth,
How has thy mind been form'd?

Ilyf. In that, great queen,
I never wanted parents. The good priests,
And pious priestesses, who with care sustain'd
My helpless infancy, left not my youth
Without instruction. But O, more than all,
The kindest, best good man, a neighb'ring sage,
Who has known better days, tho' now retir'd
To a small cottage on the mountain's brow,
He deals his blessings to the simple swains
In balms, and powerful herbs. He taught me things
Which my soul treasures as it's dearest wealth,
And will remember ever. The good priests,
'Tis true, had taught the same, but not with
That force and energy; conviction's self
Dwelt on Aletes' tongue.

Cre. Aletes, said'st thou?

Was that the good man's name?

Ilyf. It is, great queen,
For yet he lives, and guides me by his counsels.

Cre. What did he teach thee?

Ilyf. To adore high Heaven,
And venerate on earth, Heaven's image, truth!
To feel for others woes, and bear my own
With manly resignation—Yet I own,
Some things he taught me, which but ill agree
With my condition here.

Cre. What things were those?

Ilyf. They were for exercise, and to confirm
My growing strength. And yet I often told him,
The exercise he taught resembled much
What I had heard of war. He was himself
A warrior once.

Cre. And did those sports delight thee?

Ilyf. Great queen, I do confess my soul mix'd
with them.

When'er I grasp'd the oaken-platted shield,
Or sent the mimic javelin to its mark,
I felt I know not what of spirit in me.
But then I knew my duty, and repress'd
The swelling ardour. 'Tis to shades, I cried,
The servant of the temple, must confine
His less ambitious, not less virtuous cares.

Cre. Did the good man observe, and blame thy
ardour?

Ilyf. He only smil'd at my too forward zeal;
Nay, seem'd to think such sports were necessary,
To soften what he call'd, more rigorous studies.

Cre. Suppose when I return to Athens, youth,
Thou should'st attend me thither! would'st thou
trust

To me thy future fortunes?

Ilyf. O most gladly!

—But then to leave these shades, where I was nurs'd
The servant of the god, how might that seem?
And good Aletes too, the kind old man
Of whom I speak?—But wherefore talk I thus,
You only throw these tempting lures to try
Th' ambition of my youth—Please you, retire.

Cre. Ilyssus, we will find a time to speak
More largely on this subject; for the present,
Let all withdraw and leave us. Youth, farewell,
I see the place, and will retire at leisure.
Lycea, Phorbas, stay.

Ilyf. [Aside.] How my heart beats!
She must mean something sure! Tho' good Aletes
Has told me, polish'd courts abound in falsehood.
But I will bear the priestess's message to him,
And open all my doubts. [Exit.]

Phor. Great queen, why stand'st thou silent?
To labour in thy breast. [Something seems

Cre. Alas! good Phorbas,
Didst thou observe that youth? When first my eye
Glanc'd on his beautiful form, methought I saw
The person of Nicander.

Phor. Gracious queen,
Your heart misleads your eyes. The image there
Too deeply fix'd, makes every pleasing object
Bear some resemblance to itself.

Cre. Lycea,
And yet, tho' thou wast there, I well believe
Thy youth can scarce remember how he look'd,
When from the fight triumphant he return'd
Grac'd with the victor laurel; such a wreath
As now Ilyssus wears. Indeed Lycea,
Thy mother, had the liv'd, had thought as I do.
Nay, when he spake, the voice too was Nicander's.
I know not what to think, perhaps 'twas fancy;
Perhaps 'twas something more.

Phor. Illustrious queen,

You do abuse your noble mind, and lend
To mere illusions of the brain, the force [were
And power to make you wretched. Grant there
Some slight resemblance of Nicander's form
In young Ilyssus, tho' my eyes perceive not
E'en the most distant likeness; grant there were,
Yet wherefore should the sight so nearly touch thee?
Casual similitude! we know too well
Nicander left no heir. [She seems disturbed.]

I say not this,
Great queen, to heighten, but relieve your sorrows,
And banish from your breast each vain surmise
Which fancy might suggest.

Cre. Too well indeed,

O Phorbas, much too well indeed, we know
Nicander left no heir to his perfections,
No image of himself—And yet, good Phorbas,
Blame not my folly, nor demand a reason,
If I intreat thee to examine strictly
The fortunes of this young unknown. The priests
Or priestesses may know more than they entrust
To his unwary youth. The sage, he spake of,
Could'st thou not search him out; 'tis somewhere
near

He dwells, I think, upon the mountain's brow.
Thou wonder'st at me; call it, if thou please,
A woman's weakness; but obey me, Phorbas.

Phor. You say I wonder; 'tis indeed to see
My honour'd queen employ her thoughts thus idly
On griefs long past; when things of near concern
To her and Athens should alarm her nearly.

Cre. What things of near concern?

Phor. See'st thou not, queen,
Thy crown, Erectheus' crown, the crown of Athens,
Wav'ring in Fortune's power?

Cre. The gods will fix it.

Phor. The gods! Ah, great Creusa, may my fears
Be vain and groundless; but I fear the gods
Have left us to ourselves. When we resign'd
Th' Athenian sceptre to a stranger hand
We did reject their guidance. Wherefore come we
To Delphi now, but that th' offended gods
Have turn'd too long an inattentive ear
To our ill-judged petitions.

Cre. Why ill-judged?
We ask'd for heirs.

Phor. We did; for Xuthus' heirs,
The race of Æolus. I know, great queen, [not
They were to spring from thee; but Heaven permits
The native pureness of th' Athenian soil
Should mix with foreign clay. I wish we find not
More alien kings at Delphi.

Cre. Think'st thou Xuthus
Deceives us then? His worth, his piety,
Forbid the thought. Besides, the sacred place
Admits not of deceit.

Phor. Credulity

Is not the vice of age. Forgive me, queen,
If I suspect that piety, which brings us
To search for kings at Delphi. Might not Athens
Have chosen her own monarch? Her brave youth,
Her bearded sages, are they not the flower
And pride of Greece? Nay, might'st not thou, Creusa,
With liberal hand bestow th' imperial wreath?
And who has better right?

Cre. The gods, who gave it
To me, and my great ancestors.

Phor. Whate'er

The gods bestow can never be resum'd,
Tho' we repent. The pious populace
Will reverence kings from heaven.

C R E U S A.

Cre. And wherefore not? [*ficious*]
Phor. O, queen! perhaps my fears are too of-
 But let thy servant beg—
Cre. I know thy zeal
 For me, and for thy country. Rest assur'd,
 Creusa never will consent to aught
 Which can endanger Athens.
Phor. My heart thanks thee!
Cre. Mean while the youth, Ilyssus—
Phor. Should the king,
 Confirm'd by oracles, presume to fix
 A stranger on the throne—
Cre. He will not do it.
Phor. I hope he will not; yet—
Cre. The youth I spake of,
 Wilt thou enquire?—
Phor. Should Xuthus lay aside
 His usual mildness, and assume at once
 The monarch and the husband, could'st thou then—
Cre. In Athens' cause I could resist them all.
 But cease these vain suspicions. A few hours
 Will prove thy fears were groundless. Mean while,
Phorbas,
 Thou wilt find methods to inform thyself
 Touching this unknown youth.
Phor. By yonder guards,
 The king should be at hand.
Cre. I will retire
 To the pavilion, and expect him there.
 Yet hear me, Phorbas; let not Xuthus know
 Why thou enquir'st.
Phor. Xuthus has other cares.
Cre. The priestess too, I would confer with her:
 Tho' that Lycea may perform. Farewel,
 And prosper in thy task. Alas, Lycea! [*Exit Phorbas.*]
 There is a secret labours in my breast,
 But fate forbids that I should give it utterance.
 This boding heart was early taught to feel
 Too sensibly; each distant doubt alarms it;
 It starts at shadows—But retire we, maid.
 Grief is th' unhappy charter of our sex;
 The gods who gave us readier tears to shed,
 Gave us more cause to shed them.

A C T. II.

S C E N E, the Laurel Grove.

Enter Aletes and Ilyssus.

Alc. SEEM'D she disturb'd when she beheld thee?
Ily. Much;
 And when I gave her the slight hints I knew
 Relating to my fortunes, she diffus'd
 In silent tears: such soft humanity
 Sure never dwelt in any breast but her's.
 Nor did I think, till now, that I had cause
 Of discontent; but since she wept my fate,
 I seem to find a reason in her grief,
 And feel myself unhappy.
Alc. Why unhappy?
Ily. I know not why: and yet to be confin'd
 Thus to a single spot, to draw in air,
 To die in nourishment, to live, to die,
 For this was man design'd? Ah, good Aletes!
 Sure thou hast taught me, godlike man was made
 For noble purposes of general good,
 For action, not for rest. The queen propos'd
 I should attend her to the Athenian state;
 Wouldst thou advise it? Dost thou think, Aletes,
 She meant I should attend her?

Alc. Doubtless, youth,
 If she propos'd, she meant it.
Ily. And wouldst thou
 Advise I should attend her?
Alc. Wherefore not?
Ily. May I desert these shades? Or can I leave
 Thee, thee, my good Aletes?
Alc. O, Ilyssus! [*not*]
 Strive not to hide thy heart; from me thou canst
 I form'd it, and I know it. Delphi's shades
 Have now no peace for thee; thy bosom feels
 Ambition's active, unrelenting fires.
 Thou wishest and thou hop'st thou know'st not what.
 'Tis glory thou wouldst have. Go then, brave
 youth,
 Where Virtue calls thee: be the means but noble,
 Thou canst not soar too high.
Ily. My more than father!
 Thy words inspire me, and I feel a warmth
 Unknown before—but then, my birth—
Alc. Thy birth!
 Did I not teach thee early to despise
 A casual good? thou art thyself, Ilyssus.
 Inform me, youth, wouldst thou be what thou art,
 Thus fair, thus brave, thus sensibly alive
 To glory's finest feel, or give up all,
 To be descended from a line of kings,
 The tenth perhaps from Jove? I see thy cheek
 Glows a repentant blush—And yet, if birth
 Concern thee, know, prophetick is my speech;
 Thy fate is now at work, and a few hours [thee]
 May shew thee what thou art—My words alarm
Ily. They do, indeed. Oh, tell me!—
Alc. 'Tis in vain [*ceals*]
 Thou wouldst enquire from me what Heaven con-
 Till it's fit time. Diddst thou not say, Ilyssus,
 The Pythia would be here?
Ily. She comes.
Alc. Retire,
 And leave us to ourselves.
Ily. I will—And yet,
 Might I not know—
Alc. From me thou canst know nothing.
Ily. A few hours, said you?
Alc. Hence, and beg of Heaven
 To prosper the event. Retire, and leave us. [*Exit Ily.*]

Enter Pythia.

Pyth. Now, good Aletes, if thy pregnant mind,
 Deep judging of events, has ever fram'd
 Such artful truths as won believing man [*name*]
 To think them born of Heaven, and made my
 Renown'd in Greece, oh, now exert thy power!
 No common cause demands it. Kings and states
 Are our solicitors, and Athens' fate
 Hangs on my lips.
Alc. I know it. And now,
 If, as thou say'st, my secret kind advice,
 And worn experience in the ways of men,
 Have gain'd thy altars credit, and with gifts
 Loaded thy shrines, now, by one grateful act
 Thou may'st repay me all.
Pyth. What act? Oh, speak!
 And gladly I obey.
Alc. An act, my Pythia, [*gerous*]
 Which, though at first it may seem bold and dan-
 Shall in the end add lustre to thy shades,
 And make e'en kings protectors of thy fane.
 Oh, Pythia! 'twas the hand of Heaven itself
 Which brought these royal suppliants to thy
 shrine.

I could unfold a tale—but let it rest.

Thou shalt ere night know all, and blest, with me,
Th' indulgent Powers above. Only in this
Obey me blindly, Pythia.

Pyth. Say, in what?

Alet. Declare Ilyssus heir to Athens' crown.

Pyth. Ilyssus heir! What mean'st thou? 'Tis a
Too palpable. [fraud

Alet. I knew 'twould startle thee.

But 'tis because thou know'st the fraud, my Pythia,
That it alarms thee. Didst thou really think
This youth were heir to the Athenian crown,
Wouldst thou not seize the happy gift of chance,
And to the world proclaim it?

Pyth. True, I should;

And blest my fate, that in these sacred shades
I had nurs'd up, unknowingly, a king
For my protector. But what then might seem
The consequence, now seems the cause, Aletes:
Will they not say I made the king, to gain
The kind protector?

Alet. So to thee it seems;

But who will say it? the believing many
Will bow with rev'rence and implicit faith
To what thy shrine ordains: and for the few
Who may suspect the cheat, true policy
Will keep them silent. Should they dare detect
A fraud like this, and spurn at right divine,
Where were their power? the many-headed beast
Would feel the slacken'd rein, and from his back
Shake off the lordly rider. Thou seem'st
To weigh my words. To clear thy doubts at once,
Know, many days are pass'd since first I knew
Of their approach. Thou think'st I should have
It need not. I have myself prepar'd [told thee.
Each previous circumstance, and found due means
To forward the event. Thy part is easy;
Behold the oracle. [cause of woe."

Pyth. [Reads.] "A banish'd youth is Athens'
How know'st thou that? [Looking earnestly at him.

Alet. Demand not, but read on.

Pyth. [Reads.] "For that youth banish'd, A-
thens must receive

Another youth; and on the young unknown,
Who tends my shrine, and whom I call my son,
Bestow th' imperial wreath. The god declares
No more."

Alet. Thou seem'st amaz'd.

Pyth. I am indeed,

To find thee thus instructed on a theme
I came prepar'd to mention. The queen's passion,
Her lover banish'd—

Alet. What thou seest I know,

May tell thee I know more.

Pyth. Tell me what thou know'st? [fance

Alet. Not yet; 'tis better thou remain in igno-
rill all be finish'd. But pronounce the oracle,
And leave the rest to me. Dost thou distrust me?

Pyth. I do not. Yet if on slight hints alone
Thou form'st this weighty fraud, consider well
What may or may not follow. By thy looks,
There should be something hid. Say, Aletes,
What should I think? Thou smil'st.

Alet. Wilt thou obey me?

Pyth. I will: I now begin
To hope indeed. There is some secret hid
Of most important weight. But does the queen—

Alet. I will not answer thee; my time's too
precious.

Only devise some means that I may see her
Quite unobserv'd by all.

Pyth. You cannot see her

Will that suffice?

Alet. It will.

Pyth. Here, in the laurel grove.

Alet. No place more fit.

But, oh, be careful, Pythia, that the king
Observe us not! for 'tis of mighty moment
He should believe this substituted youth
Of race Æolian. To which end, my Pythia,
I have among the priests, these few days past,
When they suspected not th' approach of Xuthus,
Dropp'd doubtful hints as if I had discover'd
Some antique marks amid the osier twigs
Which form'd Ilyssus' cradle, that denote
He sprang from Æolus. And at the cave
Of great Trophonius have I ta'en due care
Such answers should be given as would induce
One of less faith than Xuthus to expect
An heir of his own family.

Pyth. The boy,
Knows he of thy intentions?

Alet. No, nor must

Till ripening time permit. His fate depends
Upon his ignorance. Soft, who comes here?

Pyth. It is the warm old man, and, as I think,
Some fair attendant of the queen. Retire,
I would know more, but—Wherefore dost thou
So ardently upon them? [gaze

Alet. Hence, away!

We must not now be seen. [Exeunt.

Enter Lycea and Phorbas.

Lyc. This place seems quite retir'd. Here if
thou wait,

I will inform the queen, and her impatience
Will bring her on the instant. Surely, Phorbas,
Something mysterious lurks beneath her tears,
Her strange anxieties. Since thou wert absent,
This unknown youth alone has fill'd her thoughts;
Of him alone she talks, recounts his words,
Describes his looks, his gestures, loyes to dwell
On each particular. Ere thou wert gone
She wish'd and e'en expected thy return:
Dispatch'd me often, tho' she knew 'twas vain,
To watch for thy arrival. When the king
Approach'd, she smooth'd her brow, as if to hide
The strugglings of her mind; nay, seem'd afraid
He should suspect her sorrows.

Phor. Then to him

She mention'd not this youth?

Lyc. Her conduct there

Was most mysterious. With a voice of fear,
She slightly dropp'd that she had seen a youth
Whom she could wish to bear with her to Athens.
The king consented, and with smiles propos'd
They should adopt him.

Phor. Ha! adopt him, saidst thou?

Lyc. In short, he spake, but at his words a glow
Of sudden joy spread o'er her face, her tongue
Forgot restraint, and in his praise grew lavish;
Then stopp'd again, and, hesitating, strove
To check it's zeal, as fearful to betray
Some hidden transport.

Phor. Whatsoever it be,

I soon shall damp her joy. This youth, Lycea,
Must not to Athens—but behold the queen.

Lyc. Oh, how impatient! ere I could return
To tell her thou wert here, she comes herself,
Eager to learn thy tidings.

Enter Creusa.

Cre. Now, my Phorbas,
Say what thou know'st at once. The king already
Consents he shall attend us.

Phor. Never, never

Shall Athens see that youth.

Cre. What mean'st thou, Phorbas?

Phor. Too much already of Æolian blood
Has hapless Athens known.

Cre. Æolian blood!

Phor. The king consents! I doubt not his con-
Yes 'twas my word, great queen, Æolian blood;
This youth descends from Æolus.

Cre. Be dumb,
Or bring me better tidings.

Phor. Worse I cannot;
But what I speak is truth.

Cre. Peace, monster, peace!
Thou know'st not truth. 'Tis thy affected zeal
For Athens, for thy country, that suggests
This horrid falsehood; 'tis thy hate of Xuthus.

Phor. What means my queen? Or how have I
deserv'd

Such harsh expressions? Does my honest love
For Athens and Creusa subject me
To such unkind suspicions?

Cre. Gracious gods!

It cannot be—Alas, forgive me, Phorbas!
I know not what I say; thy words strike thro' me,
They pierce my very soul. Oh, I had hop'd—
But tell me all; tho' I believe thee honest,
Thy zeal for Athens, and for me, may make thee
Too hasty of belief. Why art thou silent?

Phor. Amazement stops my tongue; these starts
of passion,
This violence of grief, must have a cause.

Cre. Perhaps they have, perhaps to thee, good
Phorbas,

This bustling heart may open all its sorrows.
But tell me first, what are thy proofs? From
whence

Gain'stst thou this curs'd intelligence?

Phor. O, queen!

Thy look, thy words—I know not how to answer.
Yet if there be offence in what I speak,
My ignorance offends, not I offend.
Know then, Creusa, from the priests who 'tend
This Delphick shrine, by your command I learnt
My first intelligence.

Cre. And did they say
This youth was o' Æolian race?

Phor. They did:

At least their words imported little less.
They judg'd me Xuthus' friend, not enemy,
As would thy rage suggest; and as a friend,
Dropp'd hints they thought would please me.

Cre. Then, perhaps,
It was not truth they spake; they but deceiv'd
Thy ear with well-judg'd flattery.

Phor. What follow'd [thee
Confirm'd it truth. Has the king mention'd to
What promises were given him at the shrine
Of sage Trophonius?

Cre. General promises
Of sure success, no more.

Phor. Know then, great queen,
As I return'd from converse with the priests,
I met his friend and bosom favourite, Lycon.
Joy sparkled in his eyes, and his vain tongue
O'erflow'd with transport. I observ'd it well,
And gave the torrent passage, with art,
E'en led it blindly forward; till at length
He open'd his whole soul, and, under seal
Of firmest secrecy, told me the king
Would find an heir at Delphi, such an heir
As would rejoice the unapparent shades
Of his great ancestors. At that I started.
He found his error then, and told me, glowing,
That great Trophonius had almost proclaim'd,
'Tho' not expressly, Xuthus here should find

An heir of his own race.

Cre. Of his own race!

Phor. So said he. Whether great Trophonius [spake
This oracle, I know not; but I know
Too well whose oracle to me declar'd it.

Cre. Think'st thou this youth—

Phor. Grant it were only done
To try my zeal, why should they try it now,
Unless some close design requir'd that trial?
Yes, mighty queen, I do believe this youth
Is our intended king. But, by yon Heaven,
If it be he, or any other he
Of Xuthus' race, he shall not reign in Athens,
This poniard first shall drink his blood.

Cre. Forbear!

That thought distracts me—tho' perhaps 'tis just—
Oh, Phorbas! 'twas my hope, my wish, my prayer,
That youth might reign in Athens. But thy words
Strike deadly damps, like baleful aconite,
And poison all within.

Phor. What means my queen?

Cre. O, Phorbas! O, Lycea!—But first swear
By Nemesis, and the tremendous Powers
Who punish broken faith, no word, no hint,
Shall 'scape your lips of all your queen declares.

Phor. We swear.

Cre. Know then, oh, pain to memory!
I had a son.

Phor. A son!

Lyce. Good Heaven!

Phor. A son!

Cre. Oh, my full heart!—Thy mother, my
Knew all the fatal process of my woes,
And was their only solace. Phorbas, yes,
I had a son; but witness every god
Whose genial power presides o'er nuptial leagues,
Nicander was my wedded lord. That night,
That fatal night, which drove him forth from
Athens,

Forc'd from my swelling womb, ere yet mature,
It's precious burden. To thy mother's cares
I ow'd my life. In secret she assuag'd
My piercing pangs, and to Nicander's arms
In secret she convey'd the wretched infant.
What follow'd well thou know'st. Nicander fell,
And with him doubtless fell the dear, dear charge,
Consign'd to his protection. Yet, good Phorbas,
When I beheld this youth, his looks, his voice,
His age, his unknown birth, all, all conspir'd
To cheat me into hopes. Alas, how fallen!
How blasted all!

Phor. Great queen, my tears confess,
An old man's tears, which rarely fall, confess
How much I share your anguish. Had I known
Nicander was your lord, by earth and Heaven,
I would have rais'd all Athens in his cause;
Nay, been a rebel to the best of masters,
Ere the dear pledge of your unspotted loves
Should thus have fall'n untimely. Now, alas!
I have not e'en one flattering hope to give thee.
Till now, I oft have wonder'd, why so far
Their rage pursu'd Nicander. 'Tis too plain
They knew the precious burden which he bore,
And for the hapless child the father died. [utter'd,

Cre. Oh, gods! I feel the truth of what thou
And my heart dies within me. Oh, Lycea!
Who, who would be a mother?

Phor. Be a queen,
And turn thy grief to rage. Shall aliens sport
With thy misfortunes? Shall insulting spoilers
Smile o'er the ruins of thy hapless state,
While all the golden harvest is their own?
Shall Xuthus triumph? Shall his race succeed,

While thine, (I mean not to provoke thy tears)
Thy tender blossoms, are torn rudely off,
Almost ere they bloom?

Cre. It shall not be;
No, ye immortal powers!—Yet let us wait
Till the dire truth glare on us. One short hour,
And doubt shall be no more. Then Phorbas, then,
Should he presume to place on Athen's throne
His alien race, nay, tho' this beauteous youth,
This dear resemblance of my murder'd lord,
Should be the fatal choice, by that dear shade,
Which perish'd as it reach'd the gates of life,
I will—I think I will—assist thy vengeance—
Soft! who comes here?—'Tis he! how innocent,
How winning soft he looks! Where'er it be,
He knows not the deceit. Look on him, Phorbas;
Nay, thou shalt question him.

Phor. Not I. Great queen,
Resume yourself, nor let this fond persuasion
Betray you to a weakness you should blush at.
Cre. If possible, I will.

Enter Ilyssus.

Ily. Illustrious queen,
The altar stands prepar'd, and all things wait
Your royal presence. From the king I come,
His messenger.

Cre. We will attend his pleasure.
Be near me, Phorbas; I may want thy counsel.

Ily. She looks not on me sure as she was wont.
I'll speak to her. [Aside.] Permit me, gracious

queen,
To pay my humblest thanks; for, by your means,
The king is kind as you are.

Cre. Rise, Ilyssus.
Perhaps you needed there no advocate.
Phorbas, lead on. My resolution melts,
And all my sex returns. One look from him
Outweighs a thousand proofs. Phorbas, lead on,
Or I am lost in weakness.

[Exeunt Creusa and Phorbas.]

Ily. [Stopping Lycea.] Gentle maid,
Stay yet a moment. Wherefore does the queen
Look coldly on me? Know'st thou if in aught
I have offended?

Lyc. Things of mightiest import
At present fill her mind, nor leave they room
For less affairs. My duty calls me hence. [Exit.]

Ily. I hope it is no more; yet each appearance
Alarms me now. Aletes, thou hast rais'd [doubts,
Such conflicts here, such hopes, such fears, such
That apprehension sinks beneath their weight.
Well might'st thou say these solitary shades [me
Have now no peace for me. Yet once thou taught'st
That the pure mind was it's own source of peace.
But that philosophy I find belongs
To private life; for where ambition enters
I feel it is not true.

ACT III.

SCENE, the Vestibule of the Temple.

Enter Aletes.

Aletes. WHY should I doubt? It will, it must
succeed.

Yet I could wish that I had seen Creusa
Before 'twas undertaken; for perhaps—
'Tis better as it is. Her part had then
Been difficult to act; now what she does,
Assisting or opposing the design,
Will all seem natural—the Pythia sure

Will act as I directed—Hark! the rites
Should be ere this perform'd. Why stay they then?
That noise proclaims them finish'd, and the crowd
Will soon be here—They come: I must not yet
Be seen; the Pythia in the laurel grove
May tell me what has has pass'd. [Exit.
Creusa descends basily from the Temple in great Disor-
der, Lycea following.]

Lyc. Stay, mighty queen; [you;
You know not what you do; your rage transports
You leave the rites unfinished, and the crowd
In wild amazement gaze on your departure.

Cre. I will not stay; nor will I tamely bear
My disappointed hopes. Oh, honest Phorbas!
Oh, good old man! thy penetrating mind
Saw early their design. 'Tis to supply
Nicander's loss (oh, ne'er to be supply'd!)
That we must call in strangers to the throne,
And yield our sceptres to Eolian hands.
Yes, ye great shades of my progenitors,
I hear ye call; ye shall, ye shall have vengeance!

Lyc. Whatever you design, conceal at least
This transport of your rage.

Cre. Why loiters Phorbas?
He saw my anguish; wherefore comes he not
To it's relief? They fool me past endurance.
Rely they on the weakness of my sex?
Lycea, they shall find this feeble arm
In such a cause can lay the staff by.
And grasp th' unerring thunderbolt of Jove.
Oh, Phorbas, art thou come?

Enter Phorbas from the Temple.

Phor. Now, mighty queen,
Are my suspicions just? Is Phorbas honest?

Cre. As light as truth itself. My counsellors,
My bosom friend!

Phor. Now shall a casual likeness,
If such there be, a semblant cast of features,
The sport of nature in a human form,
Shall trifle light as these weigh down conviction?
Oh, queen! from first to last th' apparent scheme
Glares on us now. Why were we brought to
Delphi,

But that this youth has long been nurtur'd here
In secret from the world; perhaps the son
Of Xuthus' self, plac'd here at first, to hide
The guilt and shame of some dishonest mother,
Though now applied to more pernicious ends.

Cre. It may be so.

Phor. And why, say why, to-day,
While Xuthus stays behind for oracles
He wanted not, is young Ilyssus bid
To meet your eyes, and win with artful tales
Your easy heart?

Cre. Bid! was he bid to do it? [him]

Phor. I saw the priestess whisper something to
Then loud she bid him wait for thy approach.

She must, forsooth, retire to sacred glooms,
And wait for inspiration. Xuthus' gold
Was what inspir'd the traitress. Yet, good Heaven!
When from the shrine she gave the dreadful words,
With what strange art the holy hypocrite
In mimic trances died!—“A banish'd youth
Is Athens' cause of woe.” Too truly said,
Tho' for a wicked purpose, to abuse

Thy easy faith, and lead thee to admit
The fraud which follow'd.

Cre. Never, never, Phorbas,
Will I that fraud admit. How readily
D'd Xuthus, when my foolish fondness ask'd it,
Consent to my request! Thou heard'st him say
[To Lyc]

We should adopt this youth; in seeming sport

He spake it, but e'en then th' insulting tyrant
Couch'd fatal truths beneath th' ambiguous phrase.

Pbor. Why should a youth designed for solitude
Be taught the arts of war? he saw himself
The impropriety. Who is this sage
Tha has instructed him? And why should Lycon
Crown'd with sudden joy, but that he found,
From thy apparent fondness for the boy,
Their schemes grew practicable. Nay, to-day,
When to the priestess' self my honest love
For Athens, and dislike of stranger kings,
Burst freely forth, the child my hasty zeal,
Commended Xuthus, talk'd of piety
And reverence to the gods: 'twas to their priests
She meant, their meddling priests, who dare pre-
sume

To sport with thrones, to sell their gods for gold,
And stamp rank falsehoods with the seal of Heaven.

Lye. Forbear, you are too loud so near the
Xuthus himself will hear. [temple;

Cre. We would be heard.

Instruct me, Phorbas; by what means to crush
This impious combination.

Pbor. Athens yet
Has honest hearts. Yes, Phorbas, yet has friends
Who dare be patriots, and prefer their country
To Xuthus' kindest smile. Some such are here,
E'en now at Delphi. But, illustrious queen,
We must with caution act. The name of Heav'n,
Howe'er usurp'd, adds vigour to their cause,
And weakens ours. We might in secret find
A sure revenge.

Cre. What?

Pbor. Death.

Cre. Of Xuthus?

Pbor. His

Might follow, but the more immediate cause
Should earliest be remov'd; the boy.

Cre. The boy!

Why should he die? believe me, honest Phorbas,
He knows not of the fraud. His ev'ry look
Proclaims his innocence. If impious men
Make him their instrument of evil deeds,
Can he be blam'd? Bred up in shades, poor youth,
He never knew the arts of base mankind,
Nor should he share their punishment.

Pbor. O queen,

They have too well succeeded. This fond passion,
Which their insidious cunning first inspir'd,
Clings close about your heart, and may at last
Undo us all.—But hark! that noise declares
The finish'd rites. Retire we to the grove,
And there will I enforce—

Cre. No, let us stay.

I will confront this artful politician,
And shew him I am yet a queen.

Pbor. Perhaps

'Twere better to retire till our full scheme
Were ripe for vengeance.—Yet, if we remain,
High words must rise, which will alarm her pride,
And set her for my purpose. [Aside.

Enter Xuthus, Ilyssus, Priests, Virgins, Guards, &c.
from the Temple.

Xuth. [Coming up to Creusa.] Thy looks, Creusa,
thy abrupt departure,

Affronting to the god himself, and these
His sacred ministers, too plainly shew
Irreverent rage, resisting Heaven's high will.
Nor dost thou want, I see, unthinking woman,
Influences of the folly.—But of this
Enough; behold the youth whom Heaven designs
Thy heir, and mine.

Cre. My heir?

Xuth. Thy heir, Creusa.

What means that look? Why with contempt
Dost thou behold him? Is he chang'd, Creusa?
Have a few hours so totally transform'd him?
Is all that winning grace of which thou spak'st
Almost with rapture, is that native charm
Of innocence all vanish'd? Hear him speak,
Hear if he talks less sensibly than when
Thy pleas'd attention hung upon his words,
And lent each syllable an added grace.
What hast thou found, or thy grave monitor,
What hast he found, which can so suddenly [cause
Have wrought this wondrous change? Is it be-
The gods' have thought, with thee, that he de-
A crown? or is it that my will consents, [serve
And therefore thine, proud queen, perversely strives
To combat thy affections?

Cre. We, methinks, [thus,
Have chang'd affections. The calm, steady X-
Whose equal mind ne'er knew the stormy gusts
Of discomposing passion, now can feel
Indecent warmth, when touch'd by pious zeal.
Nay he, to whom the tend'rer sentiments
Seem'd but the weakness of the human frame,
Now wakes inspir'd with some unusual softness.
Have oracles the power to raise at once
The kind affections? Or did he conceal
The smother'd flame, till, authoris'd by Heaven,
It might burst out unquestioned?

Xuth. Haughty queen,
I understand thee well; thou think'st this youth
A substitute of mine, and dar'st affront
Yon awful shrine, the fountain of pure truth.
But by that god who bears the vengeful bow,
And whose large eye—Yet wherefore should I strive
By oaths to undeceive you; breasts like mine
Can scorn th' imputed falsehood they detect.
Nor am I now to learn from what vile source
Thy vain suspicions rise. But know, proud queen,
This youth shall reign in Athens: and yet more,
To punish thy vain pride, since thou provok'st it,
I do believe him of Æolian race.

Cre. Thou dost?

Xuth. I do. A race as glorious, queen,
As Cecrops' boasted lineage. For the youth,
Were I to beg the choicest boon of Heaven
From my own loins to rise, I could not hope
A nobler offspring.

Pbor. Hear'st thou that? [Aside to Creusa.

Cre. I do,

And will revenge the insult.

Ily. [Kneeling.] Gracious queen!
What have I done which should estrange thee to me?
Am I the unhappy cause of these dissensions?

Cre. Kneel not to me, Ilyssus.

Xuth. Kneel not to her;

'Tis I am thy protector, and thy friend;

Nay, now thy father.

Ily. Yet, oh, mighty king,

Permit me at her royal feet to pay
My humblest duty: if I call thee father,
She sure must be a mother.

[She turns away disorderly.

Xuth. Rise, Ilyssus,

Thou see'st she stands unmov'd.

Ily. No; now she softens,

I see it in her eyes.

Cre. I will, I will

Be mistress of my soul, Why kneel'st thou, youth,
I blame not thee.

Xuth. Me then thou blamest, Creusa.

I am the object of thy rage. 'Tis Xuthus
Thou think'st unworthy of the Athenian throne.

Cre. Athens might well have spar'd a foreign lustre,

Secure of fame, had Xuthus ne'er been born.

Xuth. Ungrateful queen! had Xuthus ne'er been What now had Athens been? [born,

Cre. Perhaps in ruins.

And better so than to become the prey

Of needy wand'ring strangers.

Xuth. Earth and Heaven!

This the return?—I knew thou never lov'dst me,

Yet, witness Heav'n, I ravish'd not thy hand,

Thou gav'st it fullenly, but yet thou gav'st it;

And I well hop'd thy female sense of honour,

Of duty to thy lord, might have secur'd

At least my future peace. Thy tend'ring thoughts,

The wife's best ornament, I knew were buried

In a plebeian grave.

Cre. Plebeian grave!

Xuth. Fool that I was, I flatter'd thy vain for-

ludg'd their weak excess, and rais'd, I find,

Imaginary rivals in the tomb:

But never more, Creusa, never more

Shalt thou affront my ill-requited fondness.

I will destroy that pageant of thy passion,

Tear from that idol shrine th' insulting wreaths,

And cancel thy mock worship.

Ily. Gracious queen,

Retire a while.

Cre. Begone!—Insulting tyrant,

Touch but a wreath that's sacred to Nicander,

And, by pale Hecate's awful rites, I swear

Thy life shall pay the forfeit; nay, the lives

Of thy whole dastard race.—Plebeian grave!

Had that plebeian liv'd, imperial Xuthus

Had crouch'd beneath his feet.

Xuth. Oh, would to Heaven

This scepter'd arm could raise him from the earth,

That thou might'st see how infamous a slave

Thou dar'st prefer to Xuthus.—Come, Ilyssus,

We leave her to her follies. Look not on her,

She merits not thy tenderness. Away!

If reason should again resume its seat,

We may expect her at the banquet. Come,

All here must be our guests.

[*Exeunt Xuthus, Ilyssus, &c.*

Phor. Curb not thy passion, give it vent, great

And let it burst in thunder on thy foes. [queen,

Cre. It shall; by Heaven, it shall!—I thought

till now

My griefs were sacred, but this monster dares

Insult e'en misery itself. Oh, Phorbas,

Forgive me, if my tears will force a passage.

Now, they are gone, and I will weep no more.

Come, faithful counsellor of vengeance, come,

Instruct me how to act, steel all my soul;

Let not remorse or pity's coward voice,

The bane of noble deeds, intrude to cross us.

Nicander's injur'd ghost shall aid our counsels.

Say, shall he die?

Phor. Not yet; first be his schemes

Abortive all, his politic designs,

Then let him die despis'd.

Cre. Agreed; but how?

Phor. Now at the banquet may we crush at once

His full blown hopes. The fatal cause remov'd,

Th' effect of course must cease.

Cre. What cause?

Phor. The boy.

I see thou shudder'st at it. For the boy,

Heav'n knows, I wish to spare him, but no means,

No earthly means but this can curse completely

This politic designer. Know, great queen,

I have a poison of such subtle force,

(Why dost thou start?) of such amazing strength,

Yet so peculiar in it's operation,

That it shall seem the surfeit of the feast,

Not we have done the deed. At least shall seem so

To all but Xuthus' self; for he, methinks,

Should know the truth, at least suspect it strongly,

And yet not dare revenge.

Cre. I cannot bear it!

Howe'er we fail in our revenge, my Phorbas,

The boy must live.

Phor. Good Heav'n! is this Creusa?

Is this the vengeful queen who would not hear

Remorse or pity's voice?—Farewel then, Athens;

Yes, my poor country, thou must sink enslav'd

To foreign tyrants. She who should defend

Thy rights, thy liberties, stands tamely by,

And fees the yoke impos'd. nay, smiles to see it:

Thy queen, the last of her illustrious line,

Consents to thy destruction.

Cre. Never, Phorbas.

Do what thou wilt. With this last parting pang

I give him to thy rage.—Yet, oh! beware

I see him not again. One look from him

Would baffle all thy schemes.

Phor. Now at the banquet

Will we infuse the draught, e'en in the cup

Which the king's self presents to his young heir

In token of election.

Cre. Stay, good Phorbas.

Phor. Already have I for the just design

Suborn'd a faithful slave. Nay, should it fail,

I have a trusty band, a chosen few,

Athenian souls, who scorn to bow the knees

To any foreign land; these will I place

At the pavilion doors, if need require,

To second our attempt.

Cre. Yet stay, good Phorbas.

How kindly did he seem to sympathize

With my distress! nay, almost chid the king,

When his loud rage—

Phor. He had been taught his lesson.

'Twas all design, all artifice, to work

Upon a woman's weakness.

Cre. Think'st thou so? [woman,

Phor. I do. But, oh, my queen, be more than

Conquer this foible of thy sex.

Cre. Heaven knows

How much it costs to do it. Go then, Phorbas.

I cannot bid thee prosper. [Exit Phorbas,

Oh, Lycea,

I thou know'st not what I feel.—Haste, call him

No, stay—I think the bitterness is past,

And I can bear it now. Lend me thy arm,

I would retire, Lycea.—Yet from what

Should I retire? I cannot from myself!—

Oh, boy! thou art reveng'd; whatever thou

suffer'st

Is light, to what thy murder's feels!

A C T IV.

SCENE, the Laurel Grove.

Phorbas and Athenians.

Phor. **T**HIS way, my friends; at the pavilion doors

Stand ready arm'd, that if we need your aid,

You may observe the sign, and crush at once

These vile usurpers on the rights of Athens.

I hope we want you not.—I must be hid

A while, lest Xuthus should suspect my presence.

The queen too may repent; I'll therefore shun her
Till the deed's done, irrevocably done. [*Aside.*]

—But stir not till I come—What noise is that?
Retire, my friends, the temple's postern door
Grates on it's hinge.—Be secret, and we prosper.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

Enter Aletes and Pythia.

Alet. This quarrel was unlucky. A slight breach
Had lent my purpose strength; but wrought thus
It may defeat our hopes. She cannot now [high
With ease recede from her too rash resolves,
At least not unsuspected. Did she, says thou,
Reject thy message?

Pyth. Scarcely did she pay
The decent dues my sacred office claims.
And when I press'd her more, with fullen pride
She silently withdrew.

Alet. See her I must.

Where went she?

Pyth. To the shades which over-hang
Th' Aonian fount.

Alet. I will pursue her thither.

Pyth. It may not be, for now I know thy secret,
'Tis my turn to be prudent. Know'st thou not
Thou shouldst be cautious, nor expose thyself
To prying eyes? I heard her, as she pass'd,
In broken whispers bid Lycea haste
To Phorbas, and inform that trusty friend
That she would wait him in the laurel grove.
Here then thou may'st surprise them both, and
At once thy whole design. [crown]

Alet. Thou counsell'st well,
And I will guide me by thy kind advice.

What most I fear
Is the queen's warmth of passion. To which end
I must proceed with tenderness, and hide,
For some short time, Ilyssus from her knowledge.
I have unnumber'd cautions to premise,
Which her o'erflowing joy may haply ruin.
The banquet, is it ready?

Pyth. It has long
In vain expected it's illustrious guests.
The king already has forgot his rage,
And hopes returning thought may move the queen
To equal amity: he therefore finds
Continual causes to delay the feast.

Alet. Retire. Perhaps 'tis she; I hear the steps
Of some who move this way. [*Exit. Pythia.*]

What means he here?

Why art thou absent from the banquet, youth?

Enter Ilyssus.

Ilyf. It has no joys for me. I fear, Aletes,
Thou and the Pythia have most foully play'd
For my advancement.

Alet. Ha!

Ilyf. Where are the parents
Whom thou didst promise to my hopes? Alas!
I find no parents here, no kind regards,
No inexpressive fondness. Stern debate,
And soul dissension kindle here their torch
To usher in my greatness. E'en Creusa,
Whose tenderness I know not how alarm'd [fears,
My throbbing heart with hopes, and doubts, and
Unfelt before, e'en she has taught her eyes
To look with strangeness on me. The good king,
Who yet withdraws not his protection from me,
Seems lost in anxious thought. Unkind Aletes,
Art thou the cause of this? Say, am I sprung
Of race Æolian? for by Heaven I swear,
By that pure Fountain of immortal truth,
I will not brook deceit. I will again,
Howe'er the glittering mischief tempt my youth,
Become that humble unknown thing I was,

Rather than wear a crown by falsehood gain'd.

Alet. My dearest boy—

His virtue charms me, though it may prevent
His own success. Oh, happy, happy Athens,
To gain a king like him, whose honest soul
Starts at imagin'd fraud! [*Aside.*]

Ilyf. Speak on, Aletes,
And do not by that look of tenderness,
And murr'ring to thyself, alarm me more.

Alet. What should I speak? This very morn
This very morn I told thee a few hours [Ilyssus,
Would have seen thee what thou wert; but thy im-
patience.

Brooks not that short delay. It seems, Aletes
Has lost his usual credit with Ilyssus,
E'en with the youth his anxious care has form'd.
Think'st thou, the man who taught thy feeling heart
To start at falsehood, would himself commit
The fraud thou shudder'st at? What have I done,
Which should induce thee to a thought so base?
Did e'er my precepts contradict my heart?
Did I e'er teach a virtue I not practis'd?

—I see thou art confounded. Know then youth,
I blame not thy impatience; nay, I praise
That modesty which can so soon resume
It's fear, when all things round are big with wonder,
Ere night thou shalt know all; till then, Ilyssus,
Behave as Athens' king.

Ilyf. Oh, good Aletes,
Forgive my rashness. Yes, I know thee honest
As truth itself, and know the wond'rous debt
I owe thy goodness. Yet, if thou confess
That I have reason for these anxious cares,
Thou wilt permit me still to question thee.
Nay, look upon me whilst I speak to thee.
Perhaps thou hast some secret cause, Aletes,
For all that kind attention thou hast shewn me,
From infancy till now? Why dost thou turn
Thy eyes to earth? 'Tis plain thou hast a cause:
Thou know'st from whom I spring; how canst
thou else

With confidence assert, that yet ere night
I shall know all?—Say this at least, Aletes,
Shall the queen's anger cease?

Alet. It shall, Ilyssus.

E'en now I wait her here; on what design
I must not yet inform thee. The next time
Thou shalt behold her, thou wilt find a change
Incredible indeed, from rage to fondness,
From cold reserve to tears of bursting joy.

[*Ilyssus is going to speak eagerly.*]

—Ask me no more.—Yet something didst thou say
Relating to the cause which fix'd me here
Thy guardian, thy instructor, and—the time
Will come, when thou shalt know it all, Ilyssus,
And blest my memory.

Ilyf. Thou weep'st, Aletes.
My tears will mingle too.

Alet. Forbear, and leave me.
Yet stay a while; for now, perhaps, we part
To meet no more.

Ilyf. No more! thou wilt not leave me,
When most I want thy care! 'Twas my first thought
'Twas the first boon I ask'd of the good king,
That thou mightst be my kind instructor still.
He prais'd my gratitude, and I had promis'd
To bring him to the cottage. He himself
Shall be a suitor to thee.

Alet. Thou hast ask'd
Thou know'st not what: it cannot be, Ilyssus,
That Xuthus and Aletes e'er should meet
On terms of amity. The smiles of greatness
To me have lost their value, For thy love

I could do much, and to be sever'd from thee
Pulls at my heart-strings. But restless Fate
Has fix'd it's seal, and we must part for ever,
How hard so'er it seem. Thy youth will soon,
Amidst the busy scenes of active greatness,
Forget it's monitor; but I must bear
In hopeless solitude the pangs of absence
Till thought shall be no more.

Ilyf. Oh, Heav'nly Powers!
Then there is something dreadful yet conceal'd.
I cannot part from thee in ignorance.
Tell me, Aletes?

Alet. Would I could! But now
It must not be—Haste to the banquet, youth;
Thy duty calls thee thither.

Ilyf. Go I cannot,
Till thou assur'st me we shall meet again.
Alet. If possible, we will. If not, remember,
When thou shalt know thyself, that on thyself
Thy fate depends; that virtue, glory, happiness,
Are close connected, and their sad reverse
Is vice, is pain, is infamy—Alas!
These were the lessons of thy private life,
This I have told thee oft, but my fond tongue
Runs o'er it's former precepts, and forgets
Thou now must mount a throne; a larger scene
Of duty opens.

Ilyf. Yet the tender friend,
Who should direct me, leaves me to myself.
Canst thou abandon me?

Alet. Would Fate permit,
I would attend thee still. But, oh! *Ilyf.*,
Whate'er becomes of me, when thou shalt reach
That envid pinacle of earthly greatness,
Where faithful monitors but rarely follow,
E'en there, amidst the kindest smiles of fortune,
Forget not thou wert once distress'd and friendless.
Be strictly just; but yet, like Heaven, with mercy
Temper thy justice. From thy purged ear
Banish base flattery, and spurn the wretch
Who would persuade thee thou art more than man;
Weak, erring, selfish man, endued with power
To be the minister of publick good.
If conquest charm thee, and the pride of war
Blaze on thy sight, remember thou art plac'd
The guardian of mankind, nor build thy fame
On rapines and on murders. Should soft peace
Invite to luxury, the pleasing bane
Of happy kingdoms, know from thy example
The bliss or woe of nameless millions springs,
Their virtue, or their vice. Oh, boy—

Enter Pythia basily.

Pyth. *Ilyf.*! wherefore art thou here?
The king expects thee, and the banquet waits.
Ilyf. I cannot go.

Alet. Thou must; thy fate depends
Upon thy absence now. The queen approaches.
After the banquet I again will see thee,
And thou shalt know the whole. I will, by Hea-
ven! [*Exit. Ilyf.*]
Pyth., away, and wait me in the temple.
[*Exit. Pythia.*]

She saw them not; on her contracted brow
Sits brooding care. She speaks? My heart beats
thick,

And my tongue trembles to perform it's office.
Now fate attend, and perfect thine own work!

Enter Creusa.

Cre. To what have I consented!—Ha! who
That thus intrud'st on sacred privacy, [art thou
When the o'erburden'd mind unloads it's griefs,
It's hoarded miseries.

Alet. Thy better genius!

Cre. That voice is sure familiar to my ear!
Who art thou? Speak.

Alet. One whom adversity
Has taught to know himself. I bring thee tidings
Of an unhappy man who wrong'd thee much,
But much repented of the wrongs he did thee;
Of thy *Nicander*, queen.

Cre. *Nicander*, say'st thou?

Oh, then thou art indeed my better genius!

Alet. Now arm thy soul for wonders yet to come!
Perhaps he lives.

Cre. He lives? [*Looking on him with astonishment.*]

Alt. [*After great irresolution and struggles with himself.*] Behold him here! [*She faints.*]

—What has my rashness done!—The blush of life
Has left her cheek, the pulse forgets to move.

Where shall I turn? I cannot call for aid,

Nor can I leave her thus.—She breathes, she

—Yes, yes, *Creusa*, thy *Nicander* lives, [*Starts!*]

And he will catch at least this dear embrace,
Though now thou art another's.

Cre. Gracious gods!

It is, it is *Nicander*, 'tis my lord!

Oh, I am only thine! no power on earth

Shall e'er divide us more.

—It cannot be, my senses all deceive me—

And yet it is.—Oh, let me gaze upon thee.

Recal each trace which marks thee for my own,

And gives me back the image of my heart.

How time and grief have chang'd thee! [*hid*]

Where hast thou wander'd? How hast thou been

From Love's all-piercing sight? the bloody ruffians,

How didst thou escape their rage? Or did they

Upon the helpless innocent alone [*wreak*

their impious vengeance?

Nic. Nor on me, nor him

Did vengeance fall.

Cre. Does he live? [*tragem,*

Nic. He does. The fabled murder was all stra-

Contrived for thy dear sake; no impious ruffians

Pursued our steps; I found that I had wrong'd thee

Beyond redress, nor knew another means,

But by my death, to save thee from dishonour.

The precious charge

Forbade a real death; I therefore stain'd [*duc'd—*

With blood my well-known garments, which pro-

Cre. A curs'd effect!—But I have nearer fears;

How cam'st thou hither? Wherefore to these

The boy, where is he? [*shades?*]

Nic. Far from hence—

Cre. Thank Heaven!

Nic. He lives in peace and safety.—What dis-
turbs thee?

Cre. Nothing—I dare not tell him what I fear'd.

His honest breast might shudder at the guilt,

Though now it be more needful.—The dear boy,

Say, is he brave?

Nic. As woman could desire.

Cre. And form'd like thee?

Nic. His person far exceeds

What my most vigorous youth could boast, *Creusa*;

And his firm mind is wisdom's aged strength,

With all youth's graces soften'd.

Cre. 'Tis too much. [*der?*

Oh, happy mother! Call'st thou his name *Nican-*

Nic. No, Ion; 'twas the name the matron chose,

Who gave him to my care.

Cre. Then Ion be it.

Ion shall reign at Athens. Know'st thou, love,

The cars'd design which this *Aeolian* here,

And the vile maid—

Nic. The priestess, it should seem,
With Xuthus has conspir'd to fix his race
On Athens' throne.

Cre. But never shall his race
That sceptre wield.

Nic. It never shall, Creusa.
I have a means—

Cre. My means, thank Heaven, is surer. [*Aside.*]

Nic. But I will tell thee all from first to last,
Hear then, and weigh my words, for fate is in them.
Xuthus, th' Athenian king—

Cre. I think not of him.

[*Creusa,*

Nic. Beware of that. Whate'er thou think'st,
Xuthus must still reign on, thy lord and husband.

Cre. Xuthus, my lord! then what art thou,
Nicander?

Dost thou despise me for a crime thyself
Hast forc'd me to commit? My soul was thine
E'en when I gave my hand, and still remains
Untainted, undefil'd.

Nic. I know it well,
Thou dearest, best of women.—My torn heart
Drops blood while I propose it; yet we must,
We must for ever part.—Forbear, Creusa,
That killing look strikes through me.—Think,
oh, think,

What in this age of absence I have borne,
How combated each tender thought, and liv'd
For thy dear sake a victim to despair.
But now if thou consent'st, all, all is mine,
And I forgive my fate.—The dear, dear boy,
I have a means to place him on the throne
Secure as we could wish.

Cre. Secure he shall be,
I will proclaim him to the world as mine,
And Athens shall with joy receive it's sov'reign;
The tyrant Xuthus shall be taught to fear
A master's frown.

Nic. Thy rashness, my Creusa,
May ruin all.

Cre. I will be rash, if this
Be rashness, to declare to earth, to Heav'n,
A mother's heart-felt joy, whose only child,
Snatch'd from the grave, unhop'd for, comes to
claim,

With every grace and every virtue crown'd,
Th' imperial seat of his great ancestors.
And shall we want a means?

Nic. We need not want;
For by my care the important means is found
Already, and no human power but thine
Can hinder our success. I would have hid
The secret from thee till thy wish'd consent
Had giv'n my purpose strength, but thou defeat'st
My utmost caution, and wilt force me tell thee,
Ilyssus is young Ion!—Ha! Creusa! [*eye fixes*]
What means this look? Good Heaven! how her
My wife, my queen; oh, speak!—

Cre. Off, touch me not.
Thou can'st not bring relief.—Oh, I am curs'd
Beyond all power of aid. Thou too art curs'd,
And know'st it not.—He dies, he dies, Nicander!

Nic. Amazement! Who?

Cre. Oh, had he not been mine,
His youth, his softness, each attracting grace—
I should have staid whole ages, ere in thought
I had consented to so damn'd a deed.
Tears, tears, why burst ye not?—But what have I
To do with tears? those are for tender mothers.
He dies, he dies, Nicander!

Nic. Who? Ilyssus?

Speak, speak, Creusa.

Cre. Phorbas urg'd the deed,

And I consented; at the feast he dies
By poison.—

Nic. Fly then this instant!
Perhaps thou may'st prevent it; as thou saw'st
He parted hence.—I knew not to his death!
Cre. I go, I fly!

Nic. Yet stay; thy rashness there,
If fate has sav'd him, may undo us yet.
—The Pythia! true, the Pythia shall rush in
To stop the fatal banquet, and declare
The feast unhallow'd. Stay, Creusa.

[*Exit. Nicander,*

Cre. The Pythia, no; I will myself outstrip
The lightning's speed. Whatever be th' event,
'Tis not too late to die.

ACT V.

SCENE, the Laurel Grove.

Phorbas and Lycea.

Lyc. OH, earth! oh Heaven! oh wretched,
wretched Athens! [*lens*]

Phor. Speak on, Lycea: wherefore art thou so
Why dost thou lead me to this sacred shade?
What mean thy flowing tears?

Lyc. The queen, the queen!

Phor. Say, what of her?

Lyc. I know not; all to me
Is terror and confusion.

Phor. What thou know'st
Relate.

Lyc. She sent me forth to seek thee, Phorbas;
I found thee not, but met at my return
Creusa's self. Despair was in her eyes;
With hasty steps she shot impatient by me,
Nor listen'd when I spake. I follow'd wond'ring,
And enter'd the pavilion.

Phor. The pavilion!
Why went she to the banquet?

Lyc. Eager went,
Despair and anguish mixing on her look.
But, O good Heaven! how chang'd was that despair
To inexpressive joy, when from the crowd
She learn'd Ilyssus had delay'd the feast,
And won the king once more to ask her presence;
"Where is he? let me clasp him to my breast,"
She cried; "I now no longer will resist
Heaven's high command." Imperial Xuthus rose
With transport to receive her, and loud shouts
Proclaim'd the people's joy. When, death to fight!
Eternal pain to memory! the slave
Presents the goblet; "Fill," she cried, "a third,
I too will hail Ilyssus king of Athens.

But first, all swear, swear by immortal Jove,
By the far-darting god who here presides,
And the chaste guardian of our native fates,
Swear here, swear all, and binding be the oath,
Ilyssus only should be Athens' king."

Phor. What could she mean?

Lyc. Attentive Xuthus caught
With joy the happy omen, and all swore
Ilyssus only should be Athens' king.
This done, I saw her from Ilyssus' hand
Snatch the dire goblet, and to him resign [*draught*]
Her own untouched. The slave who mix'd the
Turn'd pale and trembled; I with eager zeal
Press'd forward, but in vain; she firmly grasp'd
The bowl, and smiling drank it to the dregs.

Phor. The poison, ha!—I knew her foolish
fondness

Would start at murder's name. But wherefore die?
Why turn upon herself her impious rage?

'Twas madness all; or else some new contrivance,
Some fresh Æolian fraud.—I care not what.
I yet will blast their schemes.—Yes, let her die,
By her own folly perish. Athens still

Survives, and shall survive.—I must be sudden.
She doubtless will betray me to the king,
And cut off e'en this last resource.—Lycea,

Be secret, and thy country shall be free. [her.]

Lyc. Were it not better, Phorbas, first to see
Perhaps some secret unreveal'd may lurk

Beneath this show of unexampled rashness.
She left the banquet soon, and with the Pythia

Enter'd the temple.

Phor. With the Pythia, say'st thou?
Then there is mischief toward.

Lyc. Yet now alone
We may surprize her, for I saw the maid

Quick from the fane return with hasty steps,
As if dispatch'd on some important message, [her.]

Perhaps to find thee out. Sure thou shouldst see
Phor. And perish, ha!—No, no, my sacred

To much already have I been deceiv'd; [country,
I will not leave thee in a woman's power.

—Yet hold, Lycea may inform her of them,
And my designs yet prove abortive. Maid,

Thy presence may be needful.

Lyc. Mine! good Heaven,
In what? Creusa will require my aid:

At least my tears are due to my poor queen
In her last moments.

Phor. Stay, she wants them not!
I know the poison's force too well, Lycea,

To fear a death so sudden. This way, maid:
Nay, thou must go; I shall have business for thee,

Some secret message to the queen, Lycea,
Which thou alone canst bear. [Exeunt.]

Enter Pythia and Nicander.

Pyth. 'Twas he, I saw him and Lycea with him.
Sure he should be inform'd!—Thou hear'st me not.

Nic. This action of the queen sits near my heart.
Pyth. She bade me tell thee.—But why waste

we time?
Thou now may'st enter at the postern gate

Unseen by all. [seest?]
Nic. Why didst thou not rush in and stop the

Thy speedy presence there had sav'd us all.
Pyth. What could I do? the queen was there

already,
And all seem'd peace and joy; could I suspect

That poison lurk'd beneath so fair a seeming?
Nic. She breaks thro' my designs.—Unhappy

woman!
My soul bleeds for her, and confusion hangs

On every rising thought.—The dear, dear boy!—
Where is he, at the banquet still?

Pyth. He is.
Nic. And where Creusa?

Pyth. I already told thee,
But thou regard'st not; in the temple's gloom

Retir'd she sits, expecting thy approach.
We there may settle all.

Nic. I fear her much. Does the poison's power
Affect her yet.

Pyth. Not yet; I would have tried
Some powerful antidote to quell it's force;

But she refuses life, and only begs
To see her son and thee.

Nic. I will attend
Upon the instant. But first hear me, Pythia;

Thou seest on what a precipice we stand.
In vain to hope we could conceal

The truth from Xuthus, from the rest we may:
'Tis thy task therefore—

Pyth. What? To own the fraud,
And to publish to the king that Delphi's shrine

Is not oracular? ha!
Nic. To the king

'Twere better sure to publish the deceit [this
Than to the world; and where's the means but

To hide it? By Creusa's art thou say'st
He is already bound in solemn oaths

To leave Ilyssus heir to Athens' throne.
Canst thou not add still stronger oaths, or ere

Thou dost reveal the secret of our fate? [king?
Then who shall dare to break them? Shall the

Thou know'st his scrup'ulous piety extends
Almost to weakness. What should tempt him to it?

Creusa dead can frame no schemes against him;
The boy to him alone must owe his greatness;

And for Nicander, never more shall Greece
Hear his forgotten name.

Pyth. It must be so;
And yet—

Nic. What yet? To Phorbas thou with ease
May'st own the truth. He will not start at fraud

In sacred things.—But see, the queen approaches,
Impatient of our stay. She changes not!

The bloom of health is still upon her cheek!
Fain would I hope—But hopes, alas! are vain.—

What hast thou done, Creusa?
Cre. [Entering.] Sav'd Ilyssus!

Nic. Thou might'st have liv'd with honour.
Cre. Liv'd! good Heaven!

I start, I tremble at the thoughts of life.
Canst thou reflect on what I had design'd,

On what I am, and what, alas! I have been,
And not perceive death was my only refuge?

—Am I not Xuthus' wife, and what art thou?
O hadst thou seen the torments of my soul,

When in one hasty moment it ran o'er
The business of an age, weigh'd all events,

Saw Xuthus, thee, Ilyssus, Athens bleed
In one promiscuous carnage!—Light at length

Burst thro' the gloom, and Heaven's own voice pro-
One victim might suffice. [claim'd

For Xuthus honour strove, and mightier love
Assumed Nicander's cause. Who then could fall?

Could Xuthus? Could Nicander?—No; Creusa.
Nic. Would thou hadst been less kind!—But,

O my queen,
To blame thee now were vain.—

Cre. To blame! 'tis praise,
'Tis triumph I demand. He lives! he reigns!

Young Ion lives! young Ion reigns in Athens!
O bring him, Pythia, bring him to my arms;

Let me but pour a last sad blessing o'er him,
And death has lost it's terrors.

How now, Lycea?
Enter Lycea hastily.

Lyc. Mighty queen, I know not
If thy command would authorize the attempt,

But Phorbas, with an arm'd Athenian band,
Now enters the pavilion, to destroy

The king and young Ilyssus.
Nic. Earth and Heaven!

What say'st thou, maid?
Cre. O let me fly to save him!

Here shall their poniards—
Nic. Rest thou there, Creusa.

Thy embassies to-day have prov'd too fatal.
My life for his I save him from the stroke,

And on the instant send him to thy arms.
Now, Fare, be doubly mine! [Exit.]

Cre. Off, let me go; I will not be restrain'd.

They tear him piecemeal!

Pyth. Patience, mighty queen!

What man can do Nicander will perform.

Cre. He is a father only to my child,

He cannot tell them what a mother feels.

—Phorbas was born the curse of me and mine.

I might have known to what his impious rage
Would urge him on, and should have first in-
form'd him.

—Gods! must I never know sweet peace again?

Not e'en in death have rest!

Pyth. Behold, who comes

To bless thee ere thou diest, and cease to murmur
At Heaven's high will.

Enter Ilyssus.

Cre. It is, it is Ilyssus—

My son, my son!

Ilyf. Good Heavens! and do I live

To see a parent melt in fondness o'er me!

—Aletes sav'd me from the soldiers' arms,

And bade me fly to find a mother here.

Art thou indeed that mother, mighty queen!

And may I call thee so? Thou art; thy looks,

Thy tears, thy kind embrace, all, all proclaim

The truth—O let me thus, thus on my knees—

Cre. Rise, rise, my child; I am, I am thy mo-

Ilyf. O sacred sound, Ilyssus is no more [ther.

That outcast youth. A mother and a queen

He finds at once.

Cre. But art thou safe, my child?

Hast thou no wound?

Ilyf. The old grey-headed man,

Who brought this morn the news of thy arrival,

Had rais'd against my breast his eager sword,

Defenceless I; when good Aletes came [staid,

And snatch'd me from the stroke. I would have

Unarm'd with him have staid, but his command

Was absolute, that I should fly to find,

What I have found, a mother! [Embraces.

Yet, oh, queen!

Why am I thus encompass'd round with wonder?

May I not know this riddle of my fate?

Why first condemn'd to pass my infant days

In this obscure retreat? If I am thine,

Thy son, illustrious queen, sure I was born

To thrones and empires?

Cre. Thou art born to thrones,

And shalt in Athens reign.

Ilyf. As Xuthus' heir!

Is Xuthus then my sire? Forgive me, queen,

I have a thousand, and a thousand doubts.

Can Xuthus be my sire?

Pyth. Forbear, Ilyssus,

Nor press thy fate too far. When time permits,

Thou shalt know all.

Cre. Shalt know it now, Ilyssus.

Not Xuthus is thy sire, but that brave man,

Who but this instant snatch'd thee from thy fate,

And by that act proclaim'd himself a father.

Ilyf. Aletes?

Cre. Not Aletes, but Nicander,

My wedded lord, thy sire!—And see, he comes

To bless thee, and confirm the sacred truth.

—Good Heaven, he bleeds!

Enter Nicander.

Nic. To death, to death, Creusa!

Amid the fray I met the fate I fought for.

All else is safe, and Xuthus now pursues

A scatter'd few, who fall beneath his sword.

—Where is my boy?—Ye guards of innocence!

How has he been beset, and how escap'd!

—Where is my boy? for I may own him now,
And clasp him to my breast; no more Aletes,
The sage instructor of a youth unknown,
But the dear father weeping o'er his child.

Ilyf. Oh, Sir, what gratitude before inspir'd,
Let duty pay.

Nic. I have no time to waste

In fondness now. Hear my last words, Ilyssus,

And bind them to thy heart. Thou still must live

The son of Xuthus. The good Pythia here

Will tell thee all the story of thy fate;

And mayst thou prosper as thou dost obey

Her sacred counsel. Xuthus too must know

The fatal tale; but to the world beside

It must be hid in darkness.

Pyth. Phorbas sure

Should be inform'd.

Nic. Phorbas has breath'd his last; [draught

And the brib'd slave who mix'd the poisonous

Fell by this hand.—Ilyssus, oh, farewell!

I will not bid adieu to thee, Creusa;

Thy colour changes, and the lamp of life

Fades in thy eye; we soon shall meet again.

Ilyssus, oh!—

Ilyf. How hard he grasps my hand!

My lord! my father! Have I learn'd so late,

To call thee by that name, and must I lose,

For ever lose?—Good Heaven, she grasps me too!

What means it, Pythia? the cold damps of death
Are on her.

Cre. Oh, my child, enquire no farther;

'Tis fitting we should part. Lycea, Pythia,

Intreat of Xuthus—yet I need not fear [him,

His goodness; though I wrong'd him, foully wrong'd

He yet will prove a father to my child,

And from the world conceal the fatal truth. [me]

Oh, I am cold—what bolts of ice shoot through

How my limbs shiver!—nearer yet, my child;

My sight grows dim, and I could wish to gaze

For ever on thee.—Oh, it will not be—

E'en thou art lost, Ilyssus.—Oh—Farewel. [Dies]

Ilyf. She dies, she dies! Was I then only mock'd

With a vain dream of bliss, to be plung'd back

In deeper misery? Did I but hear

The tender name of child breath'd fondly o'er me,

To make me feel what 'tis to lose that name?

Oh, I am ten times more an orphan now,

Than when I knew no parents.

Enter Xuthus, &c.

Xuth. Where is this murderess, who with vile deceit

Seem'd to consent to our's and Heaven's designs,

Only to make us a more easy prey

To her assassins?—Ha, Creusa dead!

And the brave stranger who preserv'd us all?

Is he too dead?—The boy—

Pyth. Ilyssus lives.

And thou hast sown, great king, that he shall reap

Supreme in Athens. Say, dost thou confirm

That oath?

Xuth. I do, by Heaven!

Pyth. Ask here no more.

The fatal tale is for thy private ear.

Retire, and learn it all. For poor Creusa,

She wrong'd not thee; upon herself alone [proves]

She drew Heaven's vengeance. And too sure

That murder but intentional, not wrought

To horrid act, before th' eternal throne

Stands forth the first of crimes. Who dare assume

Unwarranted, Heaven's high prerogative

O'er life and death, with double force shall find

Turn'd on themselves the mischiefs they design'd.

